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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 ADDIS ABABA 002041

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DEPARTMENT FOR AF AND AF/E
LONDON, PARIS, ROME FOR AFRICA WATCHER

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [KPKO](#) [AU](#) [SO](#) [ET](#)
SUBJECT: SOMALIA: TFG REPORTS ICU FORCES' ADVANCE ON
BAIDOA HALTED

REF: A. ADDIS ABABA 2013 (NOTAL)

[1](#)B. ADDIS ABABA 1998 (NOTAL)

[1](#)C. ADDIS ABABA 1952 (NOTAL)

Classified By: CHARGE D'AFFAIRES VICKI HUDDLESTON. REASON: 1.4 (B),(D)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY. Somalia's ambassador to Ethiopia and permrep to the AU, Abdulkarim Farah, expects IGAD foreign ministers to endorse a detailed plan early next week for a peace support operation (IGASOM) to Somalia, following which the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) may take further action. Meeting on July 24, several PSC members (Algeria, Nigeria, South Africa) are reportedly furious that the AU must wait for the UNSC to modify its arms embargo on Somalia, two years after originally calling for IGASOM to deploy. Potential troop-contributing countries include Kenya, which has already provided training and logistical support to TFG troops, and South Africa, which reportedly is ready to dispatch a battalion. Amb. Farah questioned whether the deployment of a single Ugandan battalion (as suggested by PM Meles) would be sufficient, citing concerns about supplies and reinforcements. Funding for IGASOM could be drawn from EU African Peace Facility funds previously earmarked for an AU operation in Somalia. Amb. Farah explained that while the TFG boycotted last week's peace talks in Khartoum to avoid legitimizing Islamic Courts Union (ICU) leader Sheikh Hassan Dahir Aweys, it is engaged in secret talks with ICU moderates to continue dialogue. (NOTE: This may be a meeting with the Ayr in Addis Ababa organized by Ethiopia. END NOTE.) Farah declined to confirm Ethiopian intervention explicitly, but said ICU forces withdrew "when our brothers came over." According to Farah, some 7,000 TFG troops oppose an estimated 5,000-8,000 ICU fighters allied with foreign fighters, including approximately 2,000 Eritrean-backed Ethiopian insurgents from the OLF and ONLF. Egypt, a member of the AU PSC, opposes Ethiopian intervention and is reportedly collaborating with Eritrea, Farah said. Farah questions popular support for the ICU, which he asserts is limited to Mogadishu. In response to Charge's observation that the TFG needed to be seen making concrete achievements in order to garner public support, Farah appealed for USG assistance to provide broadcasting equipment for a TFG radio station to counter the media bulletins being carried out by pro-ICU radio stations in Mogadishu. Farah also requested other capacity-building to the Transitional Federal Government to sustain it until elections are held in 2009. END SUMMARY.

IGAD MINISTERIAL TO MEET NEXT WEEK TO ENDORSE PKO PLAN

12. (C) On July 24, Ambassador Abdulkarim Farah, the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) of Somalia's Ambassador to Ethiopia and Permanent Representative to the African Union, briefed Charge, DCM, and poloffs on his presentation earlier in the day to the AU PSC (septel). Farah said that although the TFG had asked for the PSC to reaffirm its previous decisions on Somalia, the PSC would issue only a press statement, rather than a formal communique, because it would await an IGAD ministerial meeting the following week. Several PSC members (notably Algeria, Nigeria, and South Africa) questioned the need to wait for the UN Security Council (UNSC) to lift or modify the arms embargo on Somalia.

Algeria and South African permreps had been furious that an IGAD-led peacekeeping operation had been proposed since May 2005; many lives had been unnecessarily lost while the international community waited, Farah said. He noted that the PSC had already previously decided to support an IGAD peace support operation (IGASOM) in Somalia; the Declaration on Somalia issued by heads of state at the July 2 AU Summit should be "sufficient for individual countries to support Somalia," Farah explained.

13. (C) Further action by the AU PSC would have to follow action by IGAD, Farah explained. Kenya's permrep to the AU had announced that an extraordinary ministerial session of IGAD would convene "early next week" in Nairobi, in order to endorse a detailed plan for a proposed IGASOM peace support operation. AU Peace and Security Commissioner Said Djinnit observed at the PSC that such a plan had been requested by

ADDIS ABAB 00002041 002.3 OF 004

both the UNSC and the International Somalia Contact Group, in a July 13 PRST and July 17 communique respectively. Following IGAD's endorsement, the AU PSC would likely meet again to discuss and make a public statement on Somalia. Farah predicted further engagement by both IGAD and the AU on Somalia.

POTENTIAL TROOP CONTRIBUTORS INCLUDE KENYA, SOUTH AFRICA

14. (C) Farah agreed with Charge that Djibouti had concerns about military intervention in Somalia. While not expecting support from Eritrea or Djibouti, Farah hoped that other IGAD members (Ethiopia, Uganda, and Sudan) would provide troops. Kenya was already providing significant logistical support and training for Somalia's former military and militia forces that had undergone disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR). The TFG would not pursue territorial disputes with Kenya, Ethiopia, or Djibouti, Farah said. Somalia had "no other interests than to have our own peaceful government; whoever helps us is our friend," he added. Asked by Charge whether the deployment of a Ugandan battalion, as suggested by PM Meles (ref A), would be sufficient, Farah said that the ability to provide such forces with supplies and reinforcements was key. Every Somali home was well armed, he said, as individuals took law and order into their own hands; any intervening force would therefore have to be comprised of "strong and serious government troops" or risk being "seen as a joke." Farah said he had requested that the PSC not limit potential troop contributing countries to IGAD: it should call for IGAD to take the initiative but allow other African countries to participate. If allowed by the AU, South Africa sought to contribute a battalion, he noted.

15. (SBU) Deployment of IGASOM could draw on the EU's African Peace Facility and Peace Support Funds, he said; if successful, the AU could even deploy its African Standby Force, he added. DCM noted relative weakness of the ASF's Eastern Brigade. (NOTE: EC POLAD confirmed earlier in the

day that through its African Peace Facility, the EU has earmarked 15 million Euros each for possible AU operations in the DRC and Somalia, as well as an additional 28 million Euros for general capacity-building of the AU's peace and security programs. These funds remain available, if not reprogrammed to meet funding gaps for the AU Mission in Sudan. END NOTE.)

TFG BOYCOTTED TALKS SO AS NOT TO LEGITIMIZE ICU LEADER

16. (C) The TFG had reached a ceasefire agreement with the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) on June 22, but Sheikh Hassan Dahir Aweys had taken over and removed ICU moderates who negotiated the agreement, Farah said. In violation of the June 22 agreement, ICU forces had continued to take over territory, including Mogadishu's airport, seaport, and key compounds. The "war for Mogadishu" had begun 10 days ago, claiming 100 lives and wounding 500; the ICU had thus initiated hostilities while waiting to negotiate in Khartoum, Farah said. As a result, the TFG decided not to participate in talks with the ICU that were to be held by the League of Arab States, so as not to "legitimize" Hassan Dahir Aweys, who was a "killer."

17. (C) Farah said that the TFG was engaged in secret contacts with ICU moderates, and expected a development within the next few weeks; the TFG could not abandon dialogue, he added. The TFG was underscoring to moderates that the TFG charter called for shariah law to be the basis of government, he said. Noting that Somalia joined Djibouti, Ethiopia, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen in providing names of suspected terrorists to the UN, Farah said that the TFG was "making a deal" with moderates, but declined to elaborate.

INTERVENTION HALTED ICU'S ADVANCE ON BAIDOA

18. (C) When the ICU realized the TFG was not going to

ADDIS ABAB 00002041 003 OF 004

Khartoum, ICU forces advanced 170 km from Mogadishu to within 20 km from Baidoa, Farah said. Before, the TFG had been "frightened that Baidoa would fall into the hands of Islamicists," but now the ICU "will never even try" to advance on Baidoa. "When our brothers came over," the ICU withdrew, he said. "We are very safe now; we are very lucky," Farah declared. The TFG was now mobilizing its troops, with 500 reinforcements who had recently completed training in Kenya joining 7,000 others. While acknowledging that the TFG was "getting some support from friends," Farah declined to confirm specific military assistance from Ethiopia, but only noted that "they are very helpful." The TFG "has breathing room now," he added. With 70 per cent of the ICU's militia withdrawn from Jowhar back to Mogadishu, "they have lost their momentum now," he declared.

FOREIGN FIGHTERS ASSISTING ISLAMICIST FORCES

19. (C) While difficult to calculate the strength of ICU forces, as they massed and then quickly dispersed, Farah estimated ICU totaled approximately 5,000-8,000. In addition, numerous foreign fighters had joined them: Ethiopian insurgents in Mogadishu included 800-1,500 fighters from the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) and a greater number from the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), who had pledged support to the ICU in return for assistance in waging insurgency in Ethiopia. Eritrea was sending "huge shipments" to them, he said. The TFG was considering holding a press conference to highlight captured foreign fighters who had been conducting intelligence operations near Baidoa, including at least one Iraqi. Farah was not aware of any

Hezbollah presence among the ICU, but said it could not be ruled out. (COMMENT: Farah is clearly exaggerating the number of foreign fighters. END COMMENT.)

¶10. (C) Whereas Somalia had previously viewed Egypt as a close friend and ally due to its sponsorship of teachers and scholarships for many TFG officials, there were now strains between Egypt and the TFG, Farah said. "It is always difficult for me to convince the Egyptians," Farah observed. (NOTE: Egypt, a member of the AU PSC, opposes Ethiopia's "unilateral" intervention; see ref B. END NOTE.) Egypt and Ethiopia had a long history of tensions due to disputes over the Nile, Farah noted. Egypt was now collaborating closely with Eritrea and Libya, he said, and Libya was financing Eritrea.

¶11. (C) Farah questioned the level of popular support for the ICU. Somalis were Muslim but moderates, he said; in contrast, the ICU was "terrorizing" the people by confiscating televisions and videos, and threatening to impose the death penalty against those who did not pray five times daily. Whereas most residents of Mogadishu were either Abgal or Benadiri descended from Arab settlers, "these people are neither." Farah noted that numerous ICU leaders belonged to the same sub-clan of the Habr-Gedir/Ayr, including warlord Yusuf Indha-Ade, governor for the last 12 years of Lower Shabelle Region. Local residents of Qoryoley, 150 km south of Mogadishu, who had clashed with ICU forces and destroyed two ICU armed trucks, had done so declaring loyalty to the TFG, even though no TFG troops were among them, Farah said.

¶12. (C) Farah said that UN SRSR for Somalia Amb. Francois Lonseny Fall had briefed the PSC on a joint AU, IGAD, League of Arab States mission that had visited Mogadishu, Kismayo, and Galcayo in early July to assess popular acceptance of the possible deployment of foreign peacekeeping troops. According to Farah, Fall had earlier told the AU Commission that only Mogadishu showed resistance to the idea of foreign troops, and that other regions welcomed intervention. The only "problem area" was Mogadishu, he said, particularly areas 90 km north and south of the city. "We should leave Mogadishu (alone) for the time being," Farah said, and establish schools and health care systems elsewhere. On the other hand, one would never see ICU supporters in peaceful Kismayo, 500 km from Baidoa and Mogadishu. Similarly, Beled Weyne, which had been captured for several months by the ICU, did not accept the ICU, Farah said.

ADDIS ABAB 00002041 004 OF 004

APPEAL FOR USG ASSISTANCE WITH RADIO BROADCASTING

¶13. (SBU) The TFG was supported by 70 per cent of the populace but needed assistance to reach the remainder, Farah said. Charge highlighted the need for the TFG to garner public support through concrete achievements, and also urged the TFG to identify specific areas where international partners could provide assistance in order to build the TFG's capacity. Amb. Farah agreed that the TFG needed to "win hearts and minds" and requested that the USG the means for the TFG to broadcast to the entire Somali populace and combat extremism. Such radio broadcasts could even be transmitted from Addis Ababa, he said; the TFG would ask Ethiopia if it could use the GOE's satellite TV facilities to reach its constituents. The three leading radio broadcasts (BBC Somali Service, Horn Afrique, and Shebelle) were all run by Ayr families, he said. Farah said he had told the UK ambassador that the head of the BBC Somali Service was the cousin of Hassan Dahir Aweys, who had interviewed Hassan five times in the last month without giving similar exposure to TFG President Abdullahi Yusuf.

¶14. (SBU) Farah expressed gratitude for the support of the international community, hailing the UNSC's willingness to

revise the arms embargo on Somalia, and its recognition of the TFG as the legitimate government. Farah sought information on the sale of Somalia's embassy in Washington, D.C., and whether it could be recovered. Farah also appealed for assistance for capacity-building of the TFG, prior to elections in 2009. The TFG lacked revenue; UNDP provided salaries for parliament, he explained. Some 7,000 militia and police, trained in Baidoa for the last six months, now needed proper equipment; guaranteeing security was key to convincing skilled workers from the diaspora to return to Somalia, he said. Farah noted that the TFG had asked the EU to provide experts to travel to Baidoa to conduct a joint needs assessment, in preparation for a future donors' conference.

¶15. (C) Farah also sought information about warlord General Kanyere, whom he said had fled from Mogadishu.

¶16. (C) COMMENT: Ambassador Farah's remarks highlight the TFG's view that Ethiopian intervention has succeeded in deterring ICU forces from advancing on Baidoa, giving the TFG a much needed respite as it awaits further action by IGAD and the international community. Post strongly supports the TFG's request for assistance with radio broadcasting and capacity-building; providing such assistance would be a tangible reflection of USG support for the TFG, and consistent with President Yusuf's appeal for greater material assistance (ref C) to sustain a bulwark against Islamic extremism in the Horn of Africa. END COMMENT.
HUDDLESTON